

Why do you care? by BlackStar3991

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Summary:

"The ride back is a quiet one – but not uncomfortably so. Steve doesn't know what this will mean on the long run, but for tonight they clearly have some unspoken truce."

They come back to Steve's house and pick up the pieces.

(Sequel to part 1 of this series)

Why do you care?

Author's Note:

Note 1: I'm supposed to write an original short story with at least three pages so I can enter a contest, but I can't get anything over two. Then I sit in one afternoon and write a whole fic with nearly four pages.

I fucking hate myself, lol

Note 2: If anyone's tuned in on news from Brazil, we've just elected a fascist president who is very sexist, racist and homophobic.

This doesn't concern my fic, I'm just saying because it's fucking serious and I'm depressed.

But we resist #EleNão

The ride back is a quiet one – but not uncomfortably so. Steve doesn't know what this will mean on the long run, but for tonight they clearly have some unspoken truce. Billy's breath sounds less ragged, and he keeps his eyes on the window or on his own hands the whole time.

Once at home, Steve parks the car in front of the garage, feeling half relieved, half anxious.

"We're here", he says, tapping his fingers on the wheel and glancing at Billy's face.

The other boy looks a bit lost now, like he didn't expect to get this far and doesn't know how to proceed. "Well, that makes two of us", thinks Steve as he opens the door and gets out of the car. He goes around the front to help out, but Billy swats his hands away and stands on his own.

"It's fine", he mumbles weakly.

Billy is clearly not used to getting help, and Steve sees that it hurts his pride to do so. He nods and goes slowly to the front door, following Billy's slower pace and keeping an eye on him, just in case.

As they get inside, Steve turns on the lights and locks the door. Looking around, Billy whistles and comments:

"Damn big house, huh."

"Yeah, well" Steve answers with some bitterness not aimed at Billy "dunno what for. It's always empty anyway."

Billy glances at him curiously, but Steve gives him no pause to comment on it as he continues:

"The first aid kit is in my bedroom. Let's go upstairs."

Billy looks annoyed but doesn't complain. Supporting himself on the handrail, he nearly drags himself up the first step with a low grunt. Steve rolls his eyes steps beside the boy, extending an arm for support, which Billy slaps away.

"Dude, accepting help doesn't make you weak" Steve says exasperated, but not unkindly.

Seeing Billy try to mask an expression of what might have been shame, Steve adds teasingly:

"Or are you afraid of getting cooties?", he pokes at the uninjured side of Billy's ribs "I'm a very clean guy!"

"Says you. I don't know where you put that hand of yours", Billy teases back with a tired chuckle, relieved for the escape.

Billy rolls his eyes, grinning at Steve's expression of mock insult. But he doesn't refuse again when Steve puts a steadying arm around his waist for support. The climb is slow but painless, and Billy allows himself to lean on Steve a little more than needed. He most definitely does not miss the contact once they get on the second floor and Steve lets go of him.

Steve goes to his bedroom and turns on the light, telling Billy to wait

here while he goes downstairs to get some ice. Passing him on his way out, Steve runs a hand down Billy's arm, slightly surprised when it doesn't earn him some sort of shove or complaint.

Heading downstairs and towards the kitchen, Steve can't help but notice that, in spite of trying to maintain his notion of pride, Billy is not really shying away from his touch. He also didn't miss the way Billy was leaning against him on the stairs. Not that he minds it at all, Steve just wants to help any way he can. He wants to help Billy Fucking Hargrove. "Dammit Harrington, how did we get here?" he asks himself.

He gets back to his room bringing a soft cloth filled with ice and a small plastic bowl of water, and finds Billy sitting on his bed looking at the floor with a blank face. The boy is poking at his already hurt lip, which caused it to bleed again.

"Stop that", Steve says as he sits beside Billy on the bed and tugs the boy's wrist away from his face "You're gonna make it worse."

"My specialty, pretty boy", Billy answers with a self-deprecating yet charming smile.

Ignoring that remark, Steve puts the ice pack on Billy's black eye and orders him to hold it there. Billy half covers Steve's hand with his own when he goes to take the cloth, brushing his fingers more than lightly on the other's skin. Feeling the heat on his face, Steve reaches under the bed to grab the first aid kit.

"What's that doing there?", inquires Billy somewhat surprised.

"Hum, dog bite a while ago", explains Steve with some truth as he thought of the demodogs "And it just kinda stayed there."

Billy seems to buy it, for which Steve is grateful. There isn't much more he could say about why he kept a first aid kit under his bed and a spiked bat in his car. Before any more questions can arise, he wets a bit of cotton on the bowl of water and holds Billy's jaw with one hand while the other goes to clean his split lip. The suddenness of the movement makes Billy flinch.

“Sorry” whispers Steve taking his hands away from Billy’s skin, but still hovering within touching distance.

With a serious expression but soft eyes, Billy cleans his throat and shakes his head slightly.

“It’s fine. Hum. Go ahead.”

Steve nods and goes back to gently cradling Billy’s jaw with one hand. He can see Billy swallowing hard, but doesn’t comment on it. He cleans the cut and, with feather-like touch, spreads on it some balm he found in the kit, fingertips brushing on pink lips.

When he’s done, Steve notices Billy’s eyes fixed on him and feels his face flushing again.

“Hum, there.”, he drops the cotton on the floor and reaches for the hand holding the ice pack “Let me see that.”

Steve tugs Billy’s hand down so he can look at the cut on his brow, just above the black eye. It’s mostly fine, but it’s still got dried blood all around it. As he gets another piece of wet cotton, Steve reflects on how fucking out of ordinary this night is proving itself to be. So, what the fuck, right?

Steve rests his hand softly on Billy’s cheek, cradling his face and pretending not to notice the way the other boy’s breath hitches. Using his other hand to clean up the blood, Steve also doesn’t miss the way Billy’s face seems to lean unbidden into the touch. All the while Steve can feel the other’s gaze aimed right at him.

Steve may have taken his time on that one. Once it’s over, Steve gives a light brush of his thumb on Billy’s cheekbone, surprising even himself, before lowering the hand that cradled his face.

“Almost done”, Steve states while throwing the cotton to join the rest on the floor.

Billy opens his mouth to ask, but Steve motions to his shirt – it’s unusually closed almost to the top, and he can guess why.

“Your, hum... I saw you holding your ribs before. Can I take a look?”

“Don’t worry, princess, I’m in one piece.”, said Billy sliding a hand defensively around his middle.

Steve wants to insist but doesn’t know how to do that without pressing too much, so he passes a hand through his hair and looks at Billy while considering whether or not he should just drop it.

But Billy shifts under Steve’s gaze, disquieted by those eyes that show actual concern – disquieted and... something else, not entirely bad. Rolling his eyes, Billy huffs out a breath and asks:

“Why do you care? It’s not...”, he lets out a distressed sigh and tries to continue, but doesn’t know what to say. “You don’t wanna see that.”

Steve’s heart sinks at the way Billy’s voice breaks at the end.

“Hey, it’s ok. You don’t have to... I’d just feel a lot better if I could check for myself that nothing’s broken.”

Billy averts his gaze to the floor and nods almost imperceptibly, starting to unbutton his shirt with shaky fingers.

“Yeah, fine. Whatever.” he grumbles no louder than a whisper.

As Billy opens his shirt and exposes his bare chest, Steve grimaces. There are many fading bruises and small scars (that never seem to be there during summer, Steve makes note), with a big angry bruise on his stomach right below the ribs. Where the blow struck, it couldn’t have broken anything, but it sure hurt like a motherfucker.

“See? Ain’t broken.”

Before catching himself, Steve brings a hand to Billy’s marred skin. He traces a fading bruise that looks like the mark of ring, and his hand comes to rest on Billy’s side. Billy’s breath hitches again and Steve looks up at his face. His eyes are still a bit puffy from before, and starting to get glassy again.

“I’m sorry”, Steve whispers, as if talking aloud would break the moment.

Still with his hand on Billy and distracted by blue eyes, he feels more than sees the boy's shrug. He's not sure how long they sat like this, but must have been only a few seconds. Still, it felt like much longer and Steve doesn't want to make things uncomfortable for Billy, so he moves his thumb on the other's skin and gets up, saying:

"I'm gonna get some clothes for you to sleep in, ok?" to which Billy just nods.

Steve gets Billy some sweatpants and a comfy hoodie, changing himself into something similar. He would have slept in whatever clothes he already was, but they got dirty back at the quarry. Steve could have offered Billy the guest room, but he didn't want to leave him alone right now – and, being quite honest with himself, he didn't want to be alone either –, so he asked if it was fine that they shared he bed.

"Not even gonna buy me dinner?" asked Billy in mock insult even as he got himself settled under the covers on his side of the bed "You think I'm that cheap?"

"Oh, definitely cheap. But I can buy you breakfast" Steve jokes back as he turns off the light and walks towards the bed.

The space is not too cramped, but they can't help touching shoulders and bumping legs. Steve doesn't mind being crowded, it's good to have someone else around for a change. But he can feel Billy tensing up a bit beside him, and is about to ask if everything's ok when he feels something brushing against his hand that lays on top of the covers. It's just a hesitant touch of fingers, but for some reason it makes Steve's stomach flutter. Finding himself emboldened by the events of the night, Steve takes a deep breath and reaches out to the other hand, covering it with his own. As he feels Billy finally relaxing, he takes a last small risk and shifts his hand to intertwine their fingers. Billy let's out the shuddering breath he was holding and gives Steve's hand a small squeeze.

Steve squeezes back, and makes sure Billy sleeps to a thumb caressing small circles on his hand.

Author's Note:

Anyway, I hope this was worth the read!

Comments are hugs to the soul

P.S.: Goddamnit. In Portuguese, we usually use — for dialogue instead of " ", and I accidentally fell into the habit here. I mean, it's not a huge problem but it bothered me like fuck that each part of the series had a different pattern.

Sooooo, I came here first thing in the morning to change it lol

Please let me know if I let anything else slip <3